

### AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

#### Claims:

What is claimed is:

1. (Currently amended) A method for improving suspension characteristics of a drilling fluid with minimal number of components for use in offshore drilling, said method comprising adding to said drilling fluid a substantially linear polymer comprising mostly polar hydrophobic monomers and a smaller amount of hydrophilic monomers, without adding or the drilling fluid comprising fluid loss control agents, filtration control agents or organophilic clays, and without significantly thickening the drilling fluid in offshore drilling conditions, such that said drilling fluid shows progressive gel behavior in offshore conditions and has a laboratory Stress Build Index in the range of about 1 to about 2 at 120°F and/or a laboratory Gel Progression Index in the range of about 0 to about 10 at 120°F.
2. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 12 wherein a laboratory prepared sample of said fluid comprising said polymer has a Stress Build Index in the range of about 1 to about 2 at 120°F.
3. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 12 wherein a laboratory prepared sample of said fluid comprising said polymer has a Gel Progression Index in the range of about 0 to about 10 at 120°F.

4. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 12 wherein a laboratory prepared sample of said fluid comprising said polymer has a Gel Progression Index in the range of about 0.3 to about 7 at 120°F.
5. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 12 wherein a laboratory prepared sample of said fluid comprising said polymer has a Gel Progression Index in the range of about 0.6 to about 2 at 120°F.
6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein a laboratory prepared sample of said fluid comprising said polymer has a yield stress less than about 15 at 120°F.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said fluid comprising said polymer does not exhibit sag.
8. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein said polymer is an emulsion copolymer of 2-ethylhexyl acrylate and acrylic acid.
9. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 12 wherein said improved suspension characteristics are obtained without the addition of organoclays to said drilling fluid.
10. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 12 wherein said polymer enhances fluid loss control without the addition of a fluid loss control additive.
11. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 12 wherein said polymer provides filtration control to the drilling fluid without the addition of a filtration control additive.
12. (Currently amended) A method for improving suspension characteristics of a drilling fluid, said method comprising adding to said drilling fluid a substantially linear polymer comprising mostly polar hydrophobic monomers and a smaller

amount of hydrophilic monomers, and ~~The method of claim 1~~ wherein said polymer comprises vinyl neodecanoate, such that said drilling fluid shows progressive gel behavior.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the fluid comprises an oil base selected from the group consisting of esters, olefins, paraffins, and combinations thereof.
14. (Currently amended) A method of drilling in a subterranean formation employing a drilling fluid with minimal number of components that uses a polymer comprising mostly polar hydrophobic monomers and a smaller amount of hydrophilic monomers to provide said drilling fluid with suspension characteristics for suspending weighting agent and drill cuttings, with fluid loss control, and with filtration control, without fluid loss control agents, without filtration control agents, without organophilic clays, and without significantly thickening the fluid at temperatures as low as about 40°F, and wherein said drilling fluid can demonstrate progressive gel behavior over a temperature range of about 40°F to about 120°F and has a Stress Build Index in the range of about 1 to about 2 at 120°F and/or a Gel Progression Index in the range of about 0 to about 10 at 120°F.
15. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein said polymer is an emulsion copolymer of 2-ethylhexyl acrylate and acrylic acid.
16. (Currently amended) A method of drilling in a subterranean formation employing a drilling fluid that uses a polymer comprising mostly polar hydrophobic monomers and a smaller amount of hydrophilic monomers, and ~~The method of claim 14~~ wherein said polymer comprises vinyl neodecanoate, to provide said

drilling fluid with suspension characteristics for suspending weighting agent, and wherein said drilling fluid can demonstrate progressive gel behavior.

17. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 14~~ claim 16 wherein said polymer also imparts fluid loss control to said drilling fluid.
18. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 14~~ claim 16 wherein said drilling fluid is formulated without the addition of organophilic clays.
19. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 14~~ claim 16 wherein a laboratory prepared sample of said drilling fluid has a Stress Build Index in the range of about 1 to about 2 at 120°F.
20. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 14~~ claim 16 wherein a laboratory prepared sample of said drilling fluid has a Gel Progression Index in the range of about 0.6 to about 2 at 120°F.
21. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein a laboratory prepared sample of said drilling fluid has a yield stress less than about 15 at 120°F.
22. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 14~~ claim 16 wherein said polymer also imparts filtration control to said drilling fluid.
23. (Original) The method of claim 14 wherein said drilling fluid comprises an invert emulsion base.
24. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein said invert emulsion base comprises an olefin or paraffin.
25. (Currently amended) The method of ~~claim 14~~ claim 16 wherein said polymer further provides said drilling fluid with suspension characteristics for suspending drill cuttings.

26. (Original) The method of claim 14 comprising the steps of:
- boring a wellbore in said subterranean formation;
- completing said wellbore; and
- producing fluid from said wellbore.
27. (Currently amended) A method for providing a substantially clay free synthetic based drilling fluid that uses a substantially linear polymer comprising mostly polar hydrophobic monomers and a smaller amount of hydrophilic monomers to provide suspension characteristics for suspending drill cuttings when drilling in a subterranean formation without significantly thickening the drilling fluid at temperatures as low as 40°F and without using fluid loss control agents.
28. (Original) A drilling fluid consisting essentially of:
- a synthetic fluid invert emulsion base;
- water or brine;
- at least one emulsifier;
- weighting agent; and
- a substantially linear polymer comprising mostly polar hydrophobic monomers and a smaller amount of hydrophilic monomers.
29. (Currently amended) The drilling fluid of ~~claim 28~~ claim 30 wherein said polymer contains about 40 to about 100% by weight C<sub>6-10</sub> alkyl acrylate.
30. (Currently amended) A drilling fluid consisting essentially of:
- a synthetic fluid invert emulsion base;
- water or brine;
- at least one emulsifier;

weighting agent; and

a substantially linear polymer comprising mostly polar hydrophobic monomers

and a smaller amount of hydrophilic monomers. ~~The drilling fluid of claim 28~~

wherein said polymer contains vinyl neodecanoate.

31. (Currently amended) The drilling fluid of ~~claim 28~~ claim 30 wherein said polymer contains at least about 0.1% acrylic acid.
32. (Currently amended) A method for drilling in a subterranean hydrocarbon bearing formation, said method comprising employing the drilling fluid of ~~claim 28~~ claim 30.
33. (Original) The method of claim 32 comprising at least one step from the group consisting of:  
  
boring a wellbore in a subterranean formation;  
  
completing said wellbore; and  
  
producing fluid from said wellbore.
34. (Original) The method of claim 33 wherein said step of completing said wellbore comprises cementing and casing said wellbore.
35. (Original) The method of claim 33 wherein said step of completing said wellbore comprises gravel packing said wellbore.